

Current Servicemembers Possibly Affected by VA Data Loss

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 6, 2006 - Active-duty servicemembers and members of the National Guard and Reserves may be affected by the recent personal data loss by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA announced today.

The VA announced over the weekend that the records stolen from the home of a VA representative in May might include personal information of people currently in the military, according to a VA news release. Initial findings from VA indicated the personal information on about 50,000 active duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel may have been involved.

As the two agencies compared electronic files, VA and DoD learned that personal information on as many as 1.1 million active-duty servicemembers, 430,000 National Guardsmen, and 645,000 members of the Reserves may have been included in the data theft, according to today's release.

In May, the VA learned that an employee took home electronic data without authorization, in violation of established VA policies. The employee's home was burglarized and the data were stolen. Included were names, Social Security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 26.5 million veterans.

The VA receives records for every new accession and military enlistee because active-duty personnel and National Guardsmen and Reservists are eligible to receive certain VA benefits, according to the release.

"VA remains committed to providing updates on this incident as new information is learned," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs R. James Nicholson. "The department will continue to make every effort to inform and help protect those potentially affected, and is working with the Department of Defense to notify all affected personnel."

Nicholson said VA is currently in discussions with several entities regarding credit-monitoring services to determine how veterans and active-duty personnel potentially affected can best be served. The VA has received no reports that the stolen data has been used for fraudulent purposes.

Several resources are available to servicemembers and veterans who may have been affected by this data loss:

- The VA has set up a special Web site and a toll-free telephone number: <http://www.firstgov.gov> and 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636). Each features up-to-date news and information on the data compromise. The Web site provides steps on how to check credit reports, how to guard against identity theft and who to call if an individual believes any fraudulent activity is occurring with his or her personal information.

- Information relating to the defeat of identify theft also is available at <http://www.militaryonesource.com>.